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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 006595

SIPDIS

KATHMANDU PASS RICHELSONPH

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PBTS](#) [IN](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEW DELHI NEPAL EXPERTS CALL FOR LONG-TERM STRATEGY

REF: A. NEW DELHI 4131

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 6149

Classified By: A/DCM Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: New Delhi-based Nepal experts representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints agreed that the international community must take a longer-term view of the crisis in Nepal, and argued the US must lead in any recasting of strategy, as New Delhi is handcuffed by conflicting domestic interests and strategic perspectives. In an evolution from previous views, most seem ready to see the King depart the scene in Kathmandu. End Summary.

Washington Must Lead, Because New Delhi Can't

[1](#)2. (C) Although participants at a New Delhi-based Nepal-watchers lunch hosted by A/DCM in honor of Nepal Desk Officer David Richelsoph recognized Washington's consistent signals that New Delhi had the lead on forging a common policy on Nepal, they insisted that, ultimately, the USG will have to initiate any re-engineering of the currently stagnating policy. The lack of consensus on Nepal among India's strategic, intellectual and political communities prevents the emergence of fresh GOI policies, they explained, but New Delhi would support a productive new tack in Nepal if one were put forth by Washington. Researcher Anil Kamboj of the government-supported Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis stated that the Indian military is not backing a position of its own in the internal GOI debate on Nepal policy, but would fully support any political decision of the government. Several journalists and a retired Ambassador indicated that MEA and others responsible for Nepal might view a more activist Washington role with relief.

India Might Accept a UN Role

[1](#)3. (C) While recognizing New Delhi's historic allergy to UN involvement in South Asian conflicts, the lunch participants were surprisingly optimistic that the GOI would acquiesce to a productive UN role in mediating a solution to the Palace-parties-Maoists struggle. Even former Ambassador to Nepal KV Rajan, who maintains close contacts to the MEA, agreed that India might accept UN involvement if it appeared that an international community or UN-sponsored solution would encourage the King to climb down from his current position and provide a way out of the political stalemate. However, when pressed by A/DCM, none of the lunch guests were able to define exactly what a UN-brokered solution might look like or what role the UN might play.

Maoists: Ready to Compromise, Or Just Tactics?

[1](#)4. (C) JNU Professor of South Asian Studies SD Muni reiterated his appeal for governments to give credence to Maoist assurances that they are willing to join a democratic government, and even accept a titular monarchy. Alluding to his close connections to senior Maoist leaders (he responded to a challenge by asserting that he had met CPN(M) chief Prachanda "within the past 10 months"), Muni asked us to trust the Maoists' willingness to participate in a peaceful political process.

[1](#)5. (C) In response, MG (ret) Ashok Mehta argued forcefully that the Maoist statements of willingness to cooperate were only a tactic aimed at persuading the political parties to join forces against the King. Once the King was gone, Mehta implied, the Maoists would then hold all the cards and dispense with the parties. Moreover, Mehta asserted, Maoist treatment of the people in areas under their control belied Muni's assurance that they were true democrats at heart. Muni responded that the Maoist leadership has come to the conclusion that it cannot win militarily and is therefore ready to join a democratic government. Embassy officers underlined that the Maoists' past practice placed the burden on them to change behaviors, not just language.

Maoists Are Out-thinking the Rest of Us

[1](#)6. (C) Terrorism and insurgency expert Ajai Sahni of the

Institute for Conflict Management complained that India, the US, and other international actors were unable to assess accurately both Maoist actions and the proper course to end the conflict because of short-term thinking. While the Maoists are content to play out strategies that will advance their goals over the course of a decade or more, the international community is so determined to seek a solution within a timeline of months that it is unable to respond effectively. Muni disagreed with Sahni's assessment of Maoist intentions, but he, Rajan and Kamboj concurred that the international community's emphasis on short-term fixes was precluding an accurate assessment of how to end the conflict.

17. (C) Sahni, generally seen as hawkish against Maoist and naxalite insurgents, argued that India and the US must stop focusing on the military dimension of the conflict, and instead adopt a longer-term perspective of how to address political concerns of all parties to the crisis for a lasting solution. Rajan, who had earlier advocated increased military assistance to the RNA (Ref A) as a means to break the Maoist insurgency, agreed that a military solution is impossible. All participants agreed that the international community must seek some path that will bring the Palace, the parties and the Maoists into a political process, whether it upholds the traditional "twin pillars" format or not. None of them, however, gave any detailed proposals for such an approach.

Comment: Down with the King

18. (C) We were struck by the widespread acceptance among New Delhi's Nepal watchers of the idea that King Gyanendra has made himself dispensable. We have convoked this group repeatedly since February 1, and on this occasion found a stark souring of views on the King, which contrasts with the GOI's continued commitment to the "twin pillars" of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. While several of these interlocutors had earlier focused on pushing the King into an alliance with the parties, they have all but given up hope that he will do so. Disparaging the "twin pillars" formula as obsolete, they are now open to finding a solution without, or in spite of, the Palace. The widespread agreement among our interlocutors that Washington, instead of New Delhi, must take the initiative in new steps on Nepal, combined with MEA's admission that it is searching for more effective policies (Ref B), underlines the urgency of finding a way forward and sharing those ideas with India.

19. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:
(<http://www.state.sgov/p/sa/newdelhi>)
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